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(57) Abstract: Methods and compositions for treating or preventing acute or chronic viral infection over a short time interval in mammals with sulfated polysaccharides wherein the polysaccharides have a percent of sulfur with respect to the sugar residue effective to enable maximal interaction of constituent sulfate groups with the microbe which causes the infection and wherein the sulfated polysaccharide is not substantially endocytosed or degraded by cell receptor binding in the mammal and thereby retains antiviral activity *in vivo*.

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